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RIGHTS OF PERSONS BELONGING TO NATIONAL OR ETHNIC, RELIGIOUS AND LINGUISTIC MINORITIES

Written statement submitted by Fraternité Notre Dame, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[24 February 1998]

Rights of persons who belong to minorities

1. Every man has a right to expect from any society, freedom of action, freedom of conscience, and the possibility for his individual and social being to open up, without being hindered by discrimination based on the fact that he belongs to a minority.

2. Every individual has a right to practise his traditions, as long as they do not infringe on other people's freedom and are not expressed in a protesting or violent spirit.

3. Every person must be able to live according to his cultural, social, ethnical or religious particularities, and no pressure coming from individuals or groups superior in number should be able to influence the proper exercise of these particular practices.

4. Nowadays, however, minorities are often confronted to a struggle which can even become extremely hard, to safeguard their identity. Fraternite Notre Dame often witnessed such fratricidal fights in the various countries where it has established its humanitarian missions. The historical times we are going through are especially marked by this lack of acknowledgement of minorities. Too great a number of minorities have to raise their voices in an urgent manner in order to prevent their disappearance.

5. Being able to maintain a tradition proper to one's country, one's ethnical group or one's belief, is not a privilege, but should be a fact acknowledged by, and accessible to all. Belonging to a national or religious culture and asserting it in society - such an assertion must take place in peace and mutual respect - even if it comes from a minority, is vital and should not even be a debating point. Every society lives on differences and is enriched by cultural, religious, racial or linguistic disparities of which it is constituted.